

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:

The following claim set replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A process for manufacturing ~~process of~~ a composite nonwoven comprised of lower and upper webs, the process comprising the steps of: ~~composed of two webs, respectively, a lower web comprising long artificial and/or synthetic fibres, and an upper web comprising short natural fibres, characterized, on line, by:~~
 - (a) forming the lower web of the composite nonwoven by carding the lower web of said artificial and/or synthetic fibres having a length between 15 and 80 mm, and a dtex degree of at least $[[1,7]]$ 1.7 dtex,
 - (b) prebonding $[[\text{said}]]$ the carded lower web,
 - (c) dispersing $[[\text{said}]]$ natural fibres having a length between 0.5 and 8 mm into water to form an aqueous dispersion of the natural fibres in water,
 - (d) discharging the aqueous dispersion from a head box positioned over the lower web so as form a layer of $[[\text{laying}]]$ the aqueous dispersion on the carded lower web to form the upper web,
 - (e) forming the upper web by filtering $[[\text{the}]]$ excess water from the layer of aqueous dispersion through the lower web,
 - (f) interlacing the fibres of the upper web with the fibres of the lower web with water jets, and
 - (g) drying and reeling up the obtained composite nonwoven.
2. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the artificial or synthetic fibres are chosen from the group consisting of ~~comprising the~~ viscose fibres, polyester fibres, polypropylene fibers, polyamide fibres, polyacrylic fibres, polyvinyl alcohol fibres, $[[\text{and}]]$ polyethylene fibres, ~~as such or as a mixture~~ and mixtures thereof.

3. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the mass of~~ the lower web has a mass of ~~[[is]]~~ at least 25 g/m².
4. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein step (f) is practiced ~~by characterized in that the~~ interlacing ~~[[of]]~~ the fibres of the upper web with the fibres of the lower web ~~is obtained by~~ with 2 to 12 water jets, ~~the number of which is between 2 and 12,~~ each water jet being equipped with perforated plates which include, ~~each of them comprising one or two~~ rows of holes having a diameter of between 80 and 160 micrometers, the holes of each row being spaced 0.4 - 1.8 mm apart and the rows ~~themselves~~ being spaced 0.5 - 2mm apart, each injector being supplied with water at a pressure of between 20 and 140 bars.
5. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein step (b) includes pre-bonding ~~characterized in that the lower web with~~ is pre-bonded by means of water jets.
6. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the lower web~~ comprises ~~makes up~~ between 30 and 70 % by weight of the composite nonwoven.
7. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the~~ natural fibres are cellulose fibres.
8. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the upper web further~~ comprises ~~contains~~ synthetic fibres in an amount of ~~making up~~ at least 50 % by weight of the upper web.
9. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that the upper web~~ comprises ~~makes up~~ between 30 and 70 % by weight of the composite nonwoven.

10. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, ~~wherein characterized in that~~ the fibres of the upper web are exclusively cellulose fibres, and wherein the concentration of the ~~[[said]]~~ cellulose fibres in the aqueous dispersion ~~[[being]]~~ is between 0.5 and 10 g/l.
11. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, ~~wherein characterized in that~~ before drying according to step (g), the process further comprises embossing the composite nonwoven ~~is subjected to an embossing step.~~
12. (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, ~~wherein characterized in that~~ before reeling according to step (g), the process further comprises up, the composite is subjected to a softening the composite nonwoven step.
13. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite nonwoven comprised of upper and lower fibre webs, comprising: ~~carrying out the process object of claim 1~~
 - a carding unit for forming the lower fibre web;
 - a conveyor for transporting the carded lower fibre web;
 - a head box positioned above the conveyor for discharging a layer of an aqueous dispersion of fibres in water onto the carded lower fibre web;
 - a suction unit positioned below the conveyor downstream from the head box so as to cause excess water in the layer of aqueous dispersion on the lower web to be filtered through the lower web to thereby form the upper fibre web therefrom;
 - a water jet bonding unit positioned above the conveyor and the suction unit downstream of the head box to interlace fibres of the upper and lower fibre webs;
 - a dryer for drying the upper and lower fibre webs to thereby form the composite nonwoven; and

a reeling unit to take up the composite nonwoven.

14. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support composed of ~~two webs, respectively,~~ a lower web comprising long artificial and/or synthetic fibres, and an upper web comprising short natural fibres, the installation comprising: ~~characterized by:~~

a carding unit for forming a lower web of ~~[[said]]~~ the artificial and/or synthetic fibres having a length between 15 and 80 mm, and a dtex degree of at least ~~[[1,7]]~~ 1.7 dtex,

a conveyor ~~[[3]]~~ for transporting ~~[[a]]~~ the carded lower web,

a head box ~~[[4]]~~ set above the conveyor ~~[[3] and intended]]~~ which is adapted to contain an aqueous dispersion comprising the natural fibres having a length between 0.5 and 8 mm and to form a layer of the aqueous dispersion on the carded lower web,

a suction unit ~~[[means]]~~ set under the conveyor ~~(3) and intended~~ to eliminate ~~[[the]]~~ excess water from the layer of ~~[[as the]]~~ aqueous dispersion ~~[[is put]]~~ on the lower web,

a bonding ~~[[means]]~~ unit including ~~[[by]]~~ water jets ~~[[5]]~~ placed above the conveyor and downstream of the head box ~~[[4], intended]]~~ to interlace the fibres of the upper web with ~~[[those]]~~ the fibres of the lower web,

a drying unit ~~means (9) of the composite placed~~ downstream of the conveyor ~~[[3]]~~ to dry the composite support, and

a reeling unit ~~means (11) of the dry~~ to take up the dried composite support.

15. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support according to claim 14, wherein the bonding unit includes between 2 and 12 ~~characterized in that it comprises bonding means by water jets (5) in form of~~

- ~~several~~ hydraulic injectors provided with perforated plates, each ~~[[of them]]~~ of the perforated plates comprising ~~one or two~~ rows of holes having a diameter of between 80 and 160 micrometers, the holes of each row being spaced ~~[[0,4 - 1,8]]~~ 0.4 – 1.8 mm apart and the rows ~~themselves~~ being spaced 0.5 - 2 mm apart, ~~the number of injectors being between 2 and 12 and~~ wherein the water jets are supplied with water at a pressure of between 20 and 140 bars.
16. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support according to claim ~~[[15,]]~~ 14, further comprising ~~characterized in that it comprises~~ a manufacturing means (1) of the lower web unit placed upstream of the conveyor ~~[[(3)]]~~ for manufacturing the lower web.
17. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support according to claim 16, ~~further comprising, characterized in that it comprises,~~ between the manufacturing unit means of the lower web (1) and the conveyor ~~[[(3)]]~~, a hydraulic pre-bonding unit ~~[[(2)]]~~ comprising a pre-wetting ramp for ~~[[of]]~~ the lower web, ~~[[(2a) and]]~~ a support roll for the lower web ~~[[(2b)]]~~, and around which are placed the prebonding hydraulic injectors ~~[[(2c)]]~~ positioned around the support roll to prebond the lower web.
18. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support according to claim 14, ~~further comprising, characterized in that it comprises,~~ before the drying unit ~~[[(9)]]~~, a hydraulic embossing calendar ~~(6) consisting~~ comprised of a wire-coated suction roll defining a surface (6a) coated with a wire, ~~the surface of which has an~~ embossed with a design and hollows, and the said roll being associated with hydraulic injectors ~~(6b) placed~~ positioned around ~~[[its]]~~ the surface of the suction roll.
19. (currently amended) An installation for manufacturing a composite support according to claim 14, further comprising a softening device positioned

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~~characterized in that it also has, prior to the reeling unit reel-up (11), a softening~~
~~device (10).~~